**Indirect Speech (Statements)**

Statements in indirect speech can be introduced by a verb in a present tense. This is usual when we are:

a) reporting a conversation that is still going on

b) reading a letter and reporting what it says

c) reading instructions and reporting them

d) reporting a statement that someone makes very often

When the introductory verb is in a present, present perfect or future tense, we can report the direct speech without any change of tense:

*Paul (phoning from the station): I’m trying to get a taxi.*

*Ann (to Mary, who is standing beside her): Paul says he is trying to get a taxi.*

But indirect speech is usually introduced by a verb in the past tense. Verbs in the direct speech have then to be changed into a corresponding past tense. The changes are shown in the following table:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Direct speech** | **Indirect speech** |
| Simple present  *“I never eat meat”, he explained.*  Present continuous  *“I’m waiting for Ann”, he said.*  Present perfect  *“I have found a flat”, he said.*  Present perfect continuous  *He said: “I’ve been waiting for ages.”*  Simple past  *“I took it home with me”, she said.*  Future  *He said: “I will be in Paris on Monday”*  Future continuous  *“I will be using the car myself on the 24th”, she said.*  But note, Conditional  *I said: “I would like to see it.”* | Simple past  *He explained that he never ate meat.*  Past continuous  *He said (that) he was waiting for Ann.*  Past Perfect  *“He said (that) he had found a flat.*  Past perfect continuous  *He said he had been waiting for ages.*  Past perfect  *She said she had taken it home with her.*  Future-in-the-past  *He said he would be in Paris on Monday.*  Future-in-the-past continuous  *She said she would be using the car herself on the 24th.*  Conditional  *I said he would like to see it.*  (no tense change) |

In theory, the past tense changes to the past perfect, but in spoken English it is often left unchanged, provided this can be done without causing confusion about the relative times of the actions. For example:

*He said: “I loved her”* must become *“He said he had loved her”* as otherwise there would be a change of meaning.

However, *“He said: “Ann arrived on Monday”* could be reportedas *“He said Ann arrived/had arrived on Monday”.*

The past continuous tense in theory changes to the past perfect continuous, but in practice usually remains unchanged except when it refers to a completed action:

*She said: “We were thinking of selling the house, but we have decided not to.”*

*= She said that they had been thinking of selling the house but had decided not to.*

but

*“He said: “When I saw them, they were playing tennis.”*

*= He said that when he saw them they were playing tennis.*

Pronouns and possessive adjectives usually change from first or second to third person, except when the speaker is reporting his own words:

*He said: “I’ve forgotten the combination of my safe.”*

*= He sad that he had forgotten the combination of his safe.*

*This* used in time expressions usually becomes *that*:

*He said: “She is coming this week.”*

*He said that she was coming that week.*

Otherwise, *this* and *that* used as adjectives usually change to *the*:

*He said: “I bought this pearl/these pearls for my mother.”*

*He said that he had bought the pearl/pearls for his mother.*

Adverbs and adverbial phrases of time change as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Direct** | **Indirect** |
| today  yesterday  the day before yesterday  tomorrow  the day after tomorrow  next week/year etc.  last week/year etc.  a year etc. ago | that day  the day before  two days before  the next day/the following day  in two day’s time  the following week/year etc.  the previous week/year etc.  a year before/ the previous year |

**Indirect Speech (Commands, requests, advice)**

Indirect command, request or advice is expressed by an infinitive form:

*He said: Lie down, Tom.”*

*He told Tom to lie down.*

Negative indirect command, request or advice is expressed by putting *not* before the infinitive.

*He said: “Don’t go.”*

*He told us not to go.*

This means that indirect commands, requests or advice are usually expressed by using a verb of command, request or advice + object + infinitive

The following verbs can be used: advise, ask, beg, command, encourage, entreat, forbid, implore, invite, order, recommend, remind, request, tell, urge, warn.

*He said: “Could I see Tom, please?*

*He asked to see Tom.*

*“You had better hurry, Bill”, she said.*

*She advised Bill to hurry.*

*Don’t swim out too far, boys”, I said.*

*I warned/told boys not to swim out too far.*

*“If I were you, I’d stop taking tranquillizers”, I said.*

*I advised him to stoop taking tranquillizers.*

*“Why don’t you take off your coat?”, he said.*

*He advised me to take off my coat.*

*“You might post some letters for me:, said my boss.*

*My boss asked me to post some letters for him.*

*“Please, please don’t take any risks”, said his wife.*

*His wife begged/implored him not to take any risks.*

*“Try again”, said Ann’s friends encouragingly.*

*Ann’s friends encouraged her to try again.*